CASE III : Nardu (A goats' milk producer)

*159 157 Illiterate and suspicious, Nardu typifies the most conservative element in Maltese farming for whom nothing new can be worthy of consideration. It is probable that no amount of lecturing, demonstrations of improved methods, or capital loans from the Government, would persuade him to change the ways he knows. The prospect of machinery does not impress him although he thinks of acquiring a rotary cultivator (at about £245). His observation is, when freely translated, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" (he is aged 40).

*159 234 [425 His father was a mason with a few fields. Nardu's brother took over the family business and sold his share of the fields to Nardu, who also bought out the shares of his five sisters. He has since concentrated all his effort on his herd of goats, regarding his fields primarily as a source of fodder. During the fifteen months of study his herd varied in size from 34 to 50 animals. All the goats are of the local breed as he does "not like horned goats". He is more concerned with producing milk, under the current favourable regime of guaranteed sales to the M.M.U., than with breeding goats. Most of the kids born to his herd are sold for meat or for breeding to a dealer. Payment [426] seems to be made as money becomes available from the M.M.U every two weeks. Often however he admits to being up to two months behind with payment, settling one debt "when the next transaction is afoot".

In 1958, Nardu was talking at length about "getting two or three cows or calves". He "knows about cows from friends" but has not himself got the £300 capital necessary for two. Moreover he observes that "you can't graze cows" and their general upkeep is likely to clash with that of goats, especially where one man is working alone as in this case. There seems to be an element of prestige attached to the ownership of cows in a village such as Nardu's where the vast majority of herdsmen have only goats. Certainly his thinking is not guided by comparative costings of milk production from the cow and goat.

*159 434 [443] [511 Nardu's fields produce fodder and some food for the family so that they "will not have to buy in everything from the shops". He reckons to save between 15/- and £1 per week in this way. His wife spends £3 a week on purchased food and she looks back nostalgically to her youth when her mother spent some 30/- per week on food and clothing for a family with twelve children, while she has only three. The steady item of income in Nardu's budget is the money received from the M.M.U. for the goats' milk sold. Shopping is done in the local village but Nardu